

House Committee on Elections and Ethics  
519 Anderson House Office Building, Lansing, MI  
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In evaluating HB 5974, my message for you today can be put quite simply in three words: CONTEXT, CONTEXT, CONTEXT!

House Minority Leader Tim Greimel, speaking of this bill, put it this way, "Doing it in states like Michigan that tend to vote Democrat in presidential elections and not doing it in states that vote Republican in presidential elections will still rig the overall system in favor of Republicans." [Freep: Nov. 13, 2014

<http://www.freep.com/story/news/local/michigan/2014/11/13/michigan-bill-electoral-votes-president/18970077/> ]

The context is really quite clear: national Republicans, backed by hundreds of millions in dark money, are campaigning to split the electoral college vote in states that usually vote for the other party for president. The result if this is achieved while Republican leaning States remain winner-take-all is also quite clear: only impossibly extreme majorities in the popular vote could ever award the presidency to any non-Republican.

Moreover, as others have or will testify, it is entirely bogus to claim that splitting the electoral college vote will *attract* presidential campaigns and advertising money to Michigan. To the contrary, this measure would have the opposite effect: potential electoral college winnings would be a net gain of only 2-8 votes. That is, at most half the present value. This would sufficiently dilute any candidate's win that the incentive to campaign here would be much less than under the present winner-take-all rule.

I think Rep. Greimel had it right. This proposal taken in context can mean only one thing: that national Republicans are so intent on rigging presidential elections to their partisan advantage that they are quite happy to throw out a Michigan election law that has stood for 178 years so that Republican presidential candidates will be "elected" regularly by a shrinking minority of voters. This, of course, conserves neither Michigan's electoral tradition nor its democratic values. In fact, taken in context, the proposal makes clear that certain Republicans are quite happy to throw out democratic process *and democracy* in order to ensure their minority rule for decades.

As is well known to all present, Republicans have already gerrymandered the Michigan

State legislature and federal house districts (along with those of 20+ other states) so thoroughly that, for example, this November a majority who voted in Michigan for federal house of representatives voted for Democrats, but 9 out of 13 Michigan House seats went to Republicans. This is what our election math has come to. In the last election, a vote for a Republican candidate for House of Representatives was worth more than twice a vote for a Democrat. This state of affairs greatly weakens democracy in Michigan.

The context makes the implications of the present measure especially galling. The proposal comes from a Party that hasn't hesitated to suppress voters by any means they can get away with; a Party that didn't hesitate to use a phoney legal pretext to overturn the will of a majority of voters who rejected emergency managers, and they did this in a closed session where they thought they could get away with it; a Party that doesn't hesitate to manipulate election outcomes through electronic vote counting, if they think they can get away with it; and a Party that is most happy to unleash billions of dollars of dark money for campaigns that will publicize any lie that might work, if they think they can get away with it. All of these have weakened democracy in Michigan. Indeed, it may be dying, if the confidence of the people is any measure. Use Michigan to rig presidential elections and our democracy will be quite dead, indeed!

What some members of this legislature may not realize is that the continued pursuit of these measures has and will continue to shut down any meaningful recourse through elections. Let me be more blunt: Michigan Republicans, you are destroying electoral democracy in Michigan! Keep it up and there will be very large consequences, but they might not be the ones you are hoping for.

You may need to keep in mind that democracy is not simply anything that involves voting. Real democracy requires that the will of the people, a majority of the people, can effect desired changes in government. When the will of the people is systematically blocked, say by an oligarchy masquerading as something else, the people's will *will* find other ways to express itself!